

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
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PORTLAND DISTRICT
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**The SBA Portland District Office
Service Excellence & Innovation Center Award
*Portland Community College
Small Business Development Center***



Tom Lowles

Portland, Ore. – SBA Oregon District Director Harry DeWolf, announces that Portland Community College (PCC) Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is the SBA 2008 Service Excellence and Innovation Center Award recipient for the state of Oregon. Tom Lowles, SBDC Director, will accept the award at Oregon SBA's Small Business Week Awards Gala May 22, 2008, 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Portland, Oregon. Awards will also be given to the Small Business Person of the Year, Family Owned Business of the Year and to Small Business Champions.

Tom Lowles' SBDC is a part of Oregon's statewide network of 19 Small Business Development Centers that educate and advise entrepreneurs on starting, developing and growing their businesses. The center is conveniently located in a shopping mall, which is easily accessible by public transportation and provides more than sufficient parking for clients. The facility includes a separate classroom and has access to larger training areas through its host college. PCC has proposed including \$2.2 million in the next college bond measure to build or lease a facility in the community to house the SBDC.

Lowles and his administrative support are full-time; one counselor is full-time; and, all others are part-time. There are 18 PT counselors; all are considered employees of the college and get paid at the college rate. Meetings are held monthly to ensure communication is open and expectations are clear. Lowles provides strong leadership, stays very informed about clients' needs and directs any adjustments as needed. A bi-lingual counselor is on staff and covers the west side as well as meeting with clients at the center.

The PCC SBDC has advisors with expertise in business start-ups, marketing, finance, strategic planning, public relations, human resources, international trade, web site development, record keeping, QuickBooks, banking and other areas of interest to business owners. The SBDC business advisors are available by appointment.

Through Lowles' direction, the SBDC provides practical, hands-on education for entrepreneurs in all stages of development of their business, from starting the business, to developing the business, to growing the business. It also provides one-day workshops in a variety of critical areas for starting and developing business as well as specialized programs in international trade, food entrepreneurship, QuickBooks, computer applications, networking and security and Oregon Construction Contractor Licensing Preparatory training.

For instance, Lowles' center provides a Small Business Management Program (SBM) which is a 10-month program for existing businesses designed to assist business owners achieve their goals

through improved management, organization and operation of their business. It combines entrepreneurial education with long-term counseling. The SBDC also provides training and business counseling for entrepreneurs throughout Oregon seeking to enter the global marketplace or seeking to navigate international markets.

Lowles has been responsible for including a diversified curriculum at PCC. Opportunity Knocks is a peer-to-peer mentoring program for small business owners that bring together up to a dozen small business leaders to form a unique team that meets monthly with a facilitator to tackle members' challenges. Another program is focus on the food industry. Getting Your Recipe to Market is a 13-week extensive program joint program with the Food Innovation Center for food entrepreneurs. This program is designed to provide food entrepreneurs with a solid foundation in business development, organizational development, product development and food safety, as well as packaging, production and distribution.

Finally, Lowles outreaches to the construction industry. Oregon Construction Contractor Licensing Education is designed to help construction contractors meet the educational requirements for licensing or renewal of Oregon construction contractor licenses. The SBDC offers live classes and a study-at-home program designed to prepare individuals to take the Oregon Construction Contractors License examination.

Lowles thinks creatively to reach out to meet the needs of his community. According to Lowles, "We are all about creating employers."

Prior to becoming Director of the SBDC, Lowles spent 30 years in banking, the past 22 years with KeyBank in Oregon. He has 22 years of international banking experience and established the International Banking Department for KeyBank in Oregon.

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